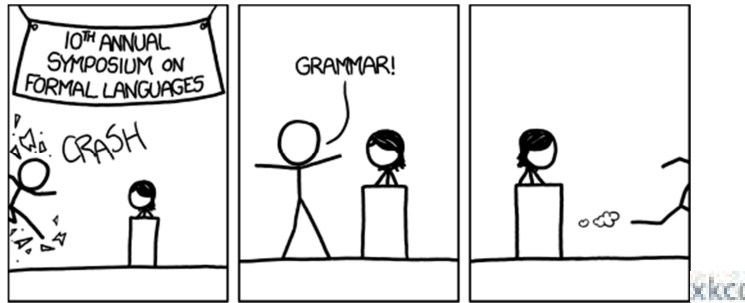


**Writing Expectations**  
**(or How to Avoid Making Dr. Tracy Cranky While She's Grading)**

\*\*\*All students are expected to abide by these expectations.\*\*\*

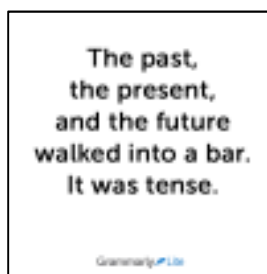
1. Do not allow a **quotation** to be a sentence unto itself.
  - This is akin to walking into a conversation at the wrong time, without context or explanation (we've all done it – some of us more regularly than others to our chagrin).



- Another analogy: it's a **QUOTATION LAND MINE** – which explodes unexpectedly and sends pieces of ideas flying in all directions with no hope of recovery. Not pretty.
  - Introduce the idea, the quotation author, and its purpose.
  - Follow up with analysis of the quotation (in other words, a paragraph should not end on a quotation).
2. Do not ignore the **format instructions** (especially page length) on the assignment. Not only will this result in an automatic grade reduction per the syllabus, it makes me want to throw my laptop across the room. I might hit one of my cats, and they are innocent bystanders. You don't want this on your conscience.
  3. Do not expend your energy in trying to figure out a loophole in how many **sources** an assignment requires.
    - When I ask for a number of sources, I expect them to be cited and integrated into the paper.
    - When I ask for a number of sources, the textbook (or other primary source, particularly those assigned for the course, such as a film, online text, etc.) may NOT be one of them.
    - When I ask for a number of sources, I do expect them to be reputable (i.e. not Wikipedia, etc.).
    - If you do not know how to find a source, use your resources. Me, for one. And we have friendly, knowledgeable, and hard-working librarians on campus. If you don't know where the library is, it's time to find it.
  4. While it may seem that approaching a topic in a broad, general way will give you more to write about, the opposite is actually true. Be as **specific** as possible in your focus, your topic, and your thesis (and do not try to take on too much). You will thank me later.
  5. **THESIS!** I'll repeat – THESIS! Every piece of writing should have one.
  6. Escape the habit of using **weak transition words** at the beginning of paragraphs like "first," "second," "another," "in conclusion," and "finally." These are giant red flags that you do not have a clear organization and development of ideas throughout your writing and indicate that

your writing is mostly just a list of thoughts without a focused thesis (see #5). They are what we call “Velcro transitions” – very easily torn apart.

7. Everything you write for this course will require at least one **citation** because you will, at the least, be using our textbook. Thus, you should ALWAYS have a **Works Cited** page.
8. Avoid (like the plague) sweeping, all-encompassing **generalizations**. You have not met everyone in the world – thus, you cannot speak for them. You can’t even speak for all the women or the men (or dogs) in the world. And you definitely can’t speak for everyone from a time period in history (unless you have a time machine – do you have a time machine?). So statements such as “all medieval people believed” or “all women do this” or “since the beginning of time” or “it has always been this way” or “no one has ever said” (as examples – note the use of “all” or “always” or “no one”) are right out.
9. Do not turn in a paper that has not been **proofread** (i.e. typos, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.). If you do not care to read your work again, then neither do I.
  - When I am reading the essay you have turned in electronically, I too can see the little squiggles of the grammar and spell check. If you haven’t even bothered to go through your work and edit those mistakes that are conveniently pointed out to you, it’s a pretty clear sign you haven’t read your work at all.
10. Check your citations. We use **MLA style** in this course. The most important consideration concerning citation style is to be consistent, thereby demonstrating that you have put thought into your work. Refer to #9.
  - Note: know where the parentheses go in a parenthetical (in-text) citation. Know where the periods go (after the second parentheses). Know that you need quotation marks around direct quotations. Know that MLA uses the author’s last name (or whatever piece of information comes first in the source’s Works Cited entry) and page numbers in its parenthetical citations.
11. One- or two-sentence paragraphs may occasionally be effective. Several strung together, however, do not make for a successful paper – it makes for a headache.
  - Do not use **incomplete sentences** (i.e. sentence fragments). Finish your thoughts.
  - Do not use **run-on sentences or comma splices**. These are confusing.
12. When discussing literature or film, use **present tense verbs** (NOT past tense). When you are reading or viewing, it is happening in the present time. It should be discussed as such.



13. Do not use **informal writing** (i.e. text-speak, etc.). While I may be young enough to translate it, I am too old to find it amusing – and it is not appropriate for professional communication.
  - As an addendum, do not refer to an author by his or her first name. If you do not know someone personally, do not be informal.

14. Do not use “one” as a pronoun. For example, “ONE can say this about the text.” Who is this one? (As a side note, it is all right to use first person “I,” though, as with everything you write, it should be used effectively.)
15. Know the correct time period or country or language in which a text was written – I dot emphasize this in class just for my health.
16. Know what takes quotation marks and what takes italics. Article titles take quotation marks. Book titles take italics.
17. Do not use the word “things” – it is vague, has no meaning, and English is a language with a rich vocabulary for you to explore. Other “things” to consider:

